The KING of DIAMONDS.

By Louis Tracy,

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CHAPTER IX.

IT would be idle to deny that Philip was startled by the sight. No braver or more resolute boy breathed. But the silence, the mystery—the gloomy aloofness of Johnson's Mews—lent a sinister aspect to an apparition formidable enough under any circumstances, but absolutely threatening and full of danger to one situated as he at that moment.

He never remembered seeing the man before, not that this repellent physiognomy was of a type to be soon forgotten. A bullet head, with prominent, bloodshot eyes, a strong, cruel mouth, a huge nose, badly broken—a certain strength of character in features debased by drink and criminality—these were the tokens writ legibly on the countenance glaring intently at the boy from without.

The two gazed at each other for an appreciable time. The man's eye wandered from Philip's face to his costume and then rested on the open portmanteau at the boy's feet. There was in his expression an air of astonishment—a certain gloating bewilderment—as of one who had stumbled unawares upon some object of such potential value that the finder could hardly believe it to be true. He was thinking, wondering, debating, with himself. The goggle eyes seemed to see more than the brain was inclined to credit.

Philip despite his alarm felt that the right course was to resent this impertinent prying into his affairs.

"Hello, you!" he shouted. "What do you want?"

The man grinned. He seemed to be about to answer when he suddenly turned his head and looked down the yard toward the entry.

Instantly he swung round and vanished noiselessly with the silent alertness of a cat, for the boy heard no sound. He simply disappeared in the darkness, and Philip, who knew every inch of the ground, realized that his most unpleasant visaged spy had not only dived into the further obscurity of the mews, which formed a cul-de-sac, but also was either in his stocking feet or wore something over his boots to deaden any possible clatter on the paving stones.

Here was a nice thing, his habitat discovered by some tramp or criminal skulking in the untenanted building marked out for the house breakers within a few days. It was too bad. He was sorely annoyed that he had not thought sooner of the potentialities of the window when the interior of the house was illumined by a candle and a ruddy fire. How long had the man stood there watching him? He had certainly seen some portion of the contents of the last portmanteau. Had he also witnessed the removal of the others to the pantry?

Philip's experience as a newspaper vender told him that all London was now familiar with his own personal appearance as well as with the semblance and value of his meteoric diamonds. The white stones, the clumps of iron ore, had been described minutely by clever journalists, who supplemented Isaacstein's clear statement by facts gleaned from encyclopedias and interviews with geologists.

Most probably this man had read long articles about him, for the story was such as to bring watery curses to the lips of every penniless vagrant in the kingdom. Indeed, the careful scrutiny bestowed on his face and clothes bore out this suspicion. Had he not changed his garments the stranger would have known his identity beyond all question. As it was, the man was puzzled and disturbed at the very moment he was about to say something. What had happened to cause him to run away? What had he seen or heard? Above all, how much did he know of Philip and his affairs?

Well, the door was locked, and it would be folly to go out again that night. The house was absolutely unapproachable save by the front. Philip resolved to remain awake until daybreak. O'Brien's spade stood against the fireplace. It was a formidable weapon, and he would not hesitate to use it if forcible entry was attempted. He must sit quietly in the dark, listening for each sound and threatening boldly when he heard any one endeavoring to open door or window.

He sighed, for he was very tired, but the vigil was imperative.

He dropped the drugget and scissors and bent again over the portmanteau. The packing operations might as well be finished now, and indeed when the light was extinguished it would be better to keep away from the window, through which a sudden thrust with an implement might do him an injury.

He took his discarded clothes and arranged them on top of the last parcels of ore and diamonds. Then he reached out for the small bundle of documents resting on the chair behind him, intending to place them in a little pocket in the flap which already covered one-half of the bag.

At that instant he again heard footsteps. Of course a very few seconds had elapsed since he first caught sight of the living specter without. The ideas recorded at such length whirled through his active brain with lightning speed just as the knowledge now came that the footsteps proceeded from the entrance to the mews and not from its extremity, while their firm regularity betokened the advent of some person who had no special reason to conceal his movements.

The boy listened breathlessly. The oncomer reached his door, passed it, stopped opposite the window, and then another face peered over the curtain.

This time it was a policeman.

For an instant their eyes met in mutual astonishment. Then the policeman came so close that his helmet rested against a pane of glass. He grinned affably and cried:

"Here! I want to speak to you."

Intuitively grasping the essential fact that his best policy was one of ready acquiescence, Philip sprang toward the door and unlocked it. He stood on the step. The constable approached.

"I hope I didn't startle you,' he began, "but I just looked in on the off chance"—

"I am very glad indeed to see you," interrupted the boy. "I am leaving here tomorrow. Just now, while I was packing some of my belongings, a very nasty looking man came and peeped in at me in the same way as you did."

He backed into the house. The policeman half followed him, his quick glance noting the open portmanteau and its array of old clothes.

"Just now?" he questioned. "Do you mean some time since?"

"No, no. Not half a minute—a few seconds ago."

"But where can he be? He hasn't left the mews or I must have seen him. I crossed the road, and no one came out in so short a time."

"Well, he is somewhere in the place. He had a horrid appearance—a man with a broken nose. He made me jump, I can assure you."

"A man with a broken nose! By Jove! I'm looking for a party of that description. A rank wrong 'un. Robbery with violence and a few other little things. What sort of a man was he? You saw his face only, I suppose?"

The constable stepped back into the paved court. A rapid twist of his hand sent a vivid beam of light dancing over ruined tenements, disheveled doorways and shattered windows.

"A tall man," said Philip, "taller than you, for I could see his chin over the string of the curtain. He had a big face, with eyes that stuck out boldly"—

"It's Jocky right enough!" cried the constable. "Now, where can he have got to? He's an ugly customer to tackle single handed," he added beneath his breath.

"Won't you wait a bit until I get some help?" said Philip anxiously.

The man appeared to debate the point. The nearest comrade was an acting sergeant, newly promoted. If he were summoned, the kudos of a smart capture would be his by right of seniority.

"No," answered the constable stubbornly. "If he is here, I will handle him myself."

Again his lamp swept the small area of the mews and revealed no living object. He quickly unfastened his belt, took off his greatcoat and readjusted belt and lamp again.

"Now I'm ready for him," he grinned. "Put my coat inside, boy, and stand at the door yourself with the candle in your hand. If you see anything, yell out to me."

Philip obeyed. These preparations for a deadly struggle appealed to his very soul, for your healthy minded boy of fifteen has generally ceased to be a highwayman or a pirate in imagination and aims rather at planting the union jack on a glacis bristling with hostile cannon.

The policeman, feeling for the loose strap of his truncheon, commenced a careful survey of the mews. He had not gone five yards when there was a loud crash of broken glass. The building at the other end of the yard possessed a couple of windows facing into another inclosure at the back. Obviously the broken nosed Jocky, unseen himself, had observed the constable's movements.

Realizing that discovery was imminent, he was effecting a strategic movement to the rear.

The policeman instantly abandoned his cautious tactics. He ran toward the door of the house whence the sound came. It resisted somewhat, but yielded to his shoulder. He disappeared inside. Philip, after closing his own door, also ran to the new center of interest, shielding the candle with one hand lest it should blow out.

Quick as he was, he missed the first phase of a Homeric combat. The violent Jocky, foiled by an unnoticed iron bar in his attempt to escape, turned like a madman on the policeman. There was no sort of parley between them. Cursing the luck that had revealed his hiding place, the man, an ex-convict, with the frame of a giant, sprang at his pursuer suddenly from an inner room.

The policeman had a second's warning. It was something, but not enough to give him an advantage. He got his truncheon out, but simultaneously his assailant was on him with a ferocity of a catamount. They closed in bone breaking endeavor, and before they were locked together for ten fearful seconds the officer of the law bitterly regretted the professional pride which sent him single handed into this unequal strife.

For he was physically outclassed, and he knew it, and there is no more unnerving knowledge can come to a man in such a supreme moment. Nevertheless he was a brave man, and he fought with all the resolution that is born of the consciousness of justice and moral right. But Providence is on the side of big battalions, and Jocky was taller, heavier, very much more active. Moreover, liberty is as potent an incentive as law any day, and law was being steadily throttled when the pale gleam of Philip's candle lit up the confines of the ruinous hovel about which the two men stamped and lurched and wrestled.

At the precise moment of the boy's entrance the policeman's knees yielded, and he fell, with his remorseless antagonist uppermost. Philip, gazing at them wild eyed, almost fell, too, for his left foot rolled on the constable's staff.

Being fashioned of the stuff which founds empires on the principle that instant action is worth a century of diplomacy—he picked up the truncheon and brought it down on Jocky's hard skull with such emphasis that the convict emitted a queer sort of cough and collapsed limply on top of his conquered adversary.

Then the boy was horrified. The two lay so still that he imagined both were dead. It is one thing to help the law, but quite another to kill a man. He did not want to be a murderer as well as a millionaire, not knowing then the qualities which go to form these varieties of genus homo are strangely alike.

He gazed at them as in a trance, but relief came when he heard them breathing stertorously. At last, after a pause

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that apparently endured unnumbered minutes, the constable weakly rolled himself free from the bulky form of his would be slayer and sat up.

He inflated his lungs vigorously. Then he managed to gasp:

"Thank you! You've saved my life!"

He pressed his ribs with both hands and gingerly felt his throat. He stood up. His lamp was still alight, but a quantity of oil had run over his tunic and trousers.

"By Jove, boy, you are a brick," he said, and his voice was under control again.

Philip answered not a word. His eyes were glued on the prostrate form of Jocky. The policeman understood his fear and laughed.

"Don't you worry about him. He'll do a stretch all right. I would have given him a harder one than that if I got a swing at him."

His words were quickly justified. The fallen man growled unintelligibly and moved. With a rapidity born of much practice the officer handcuffed him. There must have been some sense of familiarity in the touch of the steel bracelets, for the recipient of this delicate attention stirred uneasily.

"You knocked him silly," grinned the policeman, "but he will get his wits back in a minute or two. Can you bring him a drink of water? It won't do me any harm either."

Philip hurried away to comply with this request. His mind was relieved now and with the backward swing of the mental pendulum came the reflection that the least said of his connection with the case the better.

He filled a small tin cup at the scullery tap and ran with it to the scene of the capture. The constable was gently shaking his prize and addressing him by name.

"Jocky! Jocky Mason! Pull yourself together. This way for the Old Bailey!"

"If you please," said Philip, "I would be very greatly obliged were my name not mentioned at all with reference to this affair."

The policeman, whose senses were normal again, was instantly impressed by the boy's grand manner. His accent was that of the men of the University mission. And how many boys of his age would have struck so straight and truly at a critical moment?

"Well, don't you see, that will be rather difficult," was the answer. "It was you who told me where he was, and the man himself knows that without somebody's help I could not have arrested him. There is no need to mince matters. I have you to thank for not being laid here stiff."

Philip said no more. To press his request implied a powerful motive. The stars in their courses must have conspired that day to supply him with excitement.

Mason eagerly gulped the water held to his lips. Then he tried to raise his right hand to his head. Ah! He understood. A flood of oaths began to meander thickly from his mouth.

"That's better," said the constable encouragingly. "Now, up you get! It's no use, Jocky. I won't let you kick me. You must either go quietly or I will drag you to the street over the stones, and that will hurt."

The man glared dully at his captor. With the apathy of his class, he knew when he was beaten and became submissive in demeanor. Philip, holding his candle aloft, marveled at his own temerity in hitting this giant, oxlike in size and strength.

Mason wabbled his head and craned his neck awkwardly.

"Oo gev me that crack on the nut?" he asked.

"The roof dropped," was the jocular reply.

"Not it. I 'ad yer dahn, sailor. I was on yer afore ye could use yer stick. Ye was fairly bested until somebody ahted me wiv a welt on the skylight."

"Never mind, Jocky. It'll hurt you to think just now. Come on."

But the ex-convict became sensible of the unwonted light in the deserted house and slowly turned his head until his glance rested on Philip.

"Why," he roared, with an imprecation, "that's the bloomin' kid 'oo found the di-monds. I seed 'im a-countin' of 'em. White stones, the paper said, an' bits of iron, too. A trunk full of 'em. 'E 'as one in 'is pocket as big as an egg."

The policeman laughed. So did Philip, shrilly, with ready acceptance of the cue.

"Come along, Jocky. You're wool gathering. I'll get you a pint of coffee at the station just to show there's no malice," said the constable.

"The water was too strong for him," put in Philip.

The ex-convict began to protest, but he wasted words in swearing. The "sailor" grasped him by the arm and marched him down the yard, saying over his shoulder:

"Pull that door to. I'll come back for my coat in half an hour."

Philip followed, but in a sea of perplexity. He heard Mason's frantic expostulations to the policeman—what was an extra stripe to the loss of untold wealth—that youngster was richer than Rothschild, the papers said. The small lot he showed in the police court were worth £50,000—and he had tons more.

It was all of no avail. Certainly the constable had never heard such queer reasons advanced for stopping an arrest, but Mason was obviously dazed for the time—maundering about the story which everybody talked of. He would change his tune when he learned to whom he was indebted for his capture.

The boy walked behind them mechanically, shading the candle with his hand. He was so absorbed with his tumultuous thoughts that the first indication he received of anything bizarre in his appearance was the giggling of a girl who saw him standing in the arch of the mews carefully shielding the flickering wick.

He blew it out. A clock in the small jeweler's shop opposite showed the time—ten minutes past 11. In that part of London, a busy hive of men and women of the working class, he had no chance of removing his belongings before the policeman returned.

What would happen if the friendly constable believed Jocky Mason's excited statements? True, Philip had no reason to fear the law, but with exposure might come other troubles. Would any one advance a claim to his meteor? Mr. Abingdon hinted at such a thing. He paid no rent for his house; he might be turned out instantly—refused permission to remove anything except his few unsalable household goods.

Assuredly he was in an awkward predicament. Of course there was a chance that the policeman would continue to laugh at the convict's folly. If he did not, there would certainly be complication. Could he avoid them by any means? Where was there a safe hiding place for his diamonds until next day? Would mother inspire him again as she had not failed to do during so many strange events? Would her spirit guide his footsteps across this new quicksand on whose verge he hesitated?

A few doors to the left was O'Brien's shop. The old man crept into sight, staggering under the weight of a shutter. Good gracious! Why had he not thought of this ally sooner? Some precious minutes were wasted already.

"Arrah, Phil, phwat in the worruld"—

"Wait just the least bit, Mr. O'Brien. I have some portmanteaus that I want to store for the night. Do let me put them at the back of your shop. My place is not very safe, you know."

"Sure, boy, that's a shmall thing to ax. Bring 'em, an' welcome."

With the speed of a deer Philip dived into the mews. He carried the two lesser bags without extraordinary difficulty and deposited them behind O'Brien's counter. The third was almost too much for him, as the weight was all in one hand, but he got it there, breathless with the exertion.

He had to open the fourth and tear out the stuffing of paper. When filled with the packages taken from the fifth, it was beyond his power to lift it, so he dragged it bodily along the mews and into the shop.

A passerby offered to help him.

"No, thanks," he managed to say, though the effort to speak calmly took away his remaining breath. "I am only taking it to the shop there."

The man glanced at the shop—it was a marine store dealer's—a place where lead and iron and brass found ready sale. He passed on.

"Be the forchun uv war, Phil, where did ye get the illgant leather thrunks an' phwat's in them?" inquired the astonished pensioner.

The boy bravely called a smile to his aid. "I have a big story to tell you one of these days, Mr. O'Brien, but I have no time tonight. These things will not be in your way until the morning?"

"The divil a bit. If things go on as they are, there'll soon be room enough in the poor ould shop. To think afther all these years that a murtherin' thief in the war office"—

Philip was safe. He rapidly helped his friend to put up the shutters and rushed back to No. 3. Even yet he was not quite prepared for eventualities. He ran upstairs and gathered a few articles belonging to his mother, articles he never endeavored to sell even when pinched by hunger.

The last dress she wore, her boots, a hat, an album with photographs, some toilet accessories from the tiny dressing table, the coverlet of the bed on which she died—these and kindred mementos made a very credible bulk in the denuded portmanteau.

He gave one glance at the hole in the back yard as he went to the coal house for a fresh supply of coal. That must remain. It probably would not be seen. In any case it remained inexplicable.

He was stirring the fire when a tap sounded on the door, and the policeman entered, followed by an inspector.

CHAPTER X.

"THIS is the boy, sir," said the policeman.

"Oh, is that him?" observed the inspector, sticking his thumbs into his belt and gazing at Philip with professional severity.

Philip met their scrutiny without flinching. He leaned against the wall with his hands in his pockets, one fist clinched over the pouchful of gold, the other guarding a diamond bigger than the Koh-i-Noor.

"I am sorry I have only one chair, gentlemen," he said apologetically.

"That's all right lad," said the inspector. "The constable here tells me that you very pluckily helped him to capture a notorious burglar. The man was hiding in this mews, and it seems you first saw him looking in through your window. What were you doing at the time?"

"Packing my portmanteau."

"Oh, packing your portmanteau."

"Yes. That is it."

He stooped and nonchalantly threw it open. His clothes and boots and some of the other contents were exposed to view. The inspector laughed.

"Not many diamonds there, Bradley."

"No, sir. I told you Mason was talking rubbish."

"Did he say any more about me being the boy who found the meteor?" asked Philip, with a first rate attempt at a grin.

"Wouldn't talk of anything else," volunteered P. C. Bradley.

"Judging by the way he dropped when I hit him, I expect he saw stars," said Philip.

"Are you leaving here?" asked the inspector.

"Yes, I must. The company which owns these premises intends to pull them down on the first of next month."

"What is your name?"

"Anson."

"Ah! I think I remember hearing something about your mother's death. Very nice woman, I was told. A lady too."

"Yes; all that and more."

"Of course. That accounts for your manners and appearance. Have you found some friends?"

The inspector's glance roved from the serviceable portmanteau to Philip's tidy garments, and it was his business to make rapid deductions.

"Yes, most fortunately."

"Anybody connected with Sharpe & Smith?" the constable put in.

"Sharpe & Smith? Who are they?"

"Don't you know? Their young man certainly didn't seem to know much about your movements. He has been here twice looking for you. The first time was—let me see—last Monday about 4 o'clock. I was on duty in the main road, and he asked me for some information. We came and looked in, but your door was locked. The man on this beat this afternoon told me that the same clerk was making further inquiries today, so as soon as I came on night duty I strolled into the mews to find out if you were at home. That is how I happened to see you."

He turned toward the inspector.

"He was packing his bag at the moment, sir, and Mason had evidently been scared from the window by my footsteps in the arch."

The inspector pursed out his underlip.

"The whole thing is perfectly clear," he said. "Boy, have you got a watch?"

"No," said Philip, surprised by this odd question.

"Bradley, he hasn't got a watch," observed the inspector. He again addressed Philip.

"Where are you going tomorrow?"

"I am not quite sure, but my address will be known to Mrs. Wrigley, the James street laundry, Shepherd's Bush."

"Ah! The constable says you do not wish to be mixed up in the arrest of Mason. There is no need for you to appear in court, but—er—in such cases as yours the—er—police like to show their—er—appreciation of your services. That is so, Bradley, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir. If it hadn't been for him, I shouldn't be here now. Jocky had me fairly cornered."

"You had no time to summon assistance?"

"I barely heard he was here before the window was smashed, and I knew he was trying to get out the other way. You heard him, Anson?"

Philip looked the policeman squarely in the eyes.

"You had just taken off your greatcoat when the glass cracked," he said.

Police Constable Bradley stooped to pick up his coat. He did not wish this portion of the night's proceedings to be described too minutely. In moving the garment he disturbed the packet of letters. Instantly Philip recalled the names of the solicitors mentioned by the constable.

"You said that a clerk from Messrs. Sharpe & Smith called here twice?" he asked.

"Yes."

He picked out one of the letters, opened it and made certain of his facts before he cried angrily:

"Then I want to have nothing whatever to do with them. They treated my mother shamefully."

The inspector had sharp eyes.

"What is the date of that letter?" he inquired.

"Jan. 18 of this year."

"And what are those—pawn tickets?"

"Yes, some of my mother's jewelry and dresses. Her wedding ring was the last to go. Most of them are out of date, but I intend to—I will try to save some of them, especially her wedding ring."

Jocky Mason's romance was now dissipated into thin air. The contents of the portmanteau, the squalid appearance of the house, the date of the solicitor's letter, the bundle of pawn tickets offered conclusive evidence to the inspector's matter of fact mind that the ex-convict's story was the effect of a truncheon rapidly applied to a brain excited by the newspaper comments on a sensational yarn about some boy who had found a parcel of diamonds.

This youngster had not been favored by any such extraordinary piece of luck. Simple chance had led him to put the police on the track of a much wanted scoundrel, and he had very bravely prevented a member of the force from being badly worsted in the ensuing encounter.

A subscription would be made among the officers and men of the division, and they would give him a silver watch with a suitable inscription.

The inspector noted the address given by Philip. It was on the tip of his tongue to ask his Christian name, when the constable suggested that they should examine the stable in which Mason had hidden.

They went up the mews. Philip locked his door, extinguished his candle and lay down on the mattress, fully dressed, with his newly bought rug for covering.

He was so utterly tired, so exhausted physically and mentally by the sturm und drang of this eventful day that he was sound asleep when the two men returned.

They saw him through the window.

"He's a fine lad," said the inspector thoughtfully. "I wonder what he is going to make of himself. We might have asked him who his friends were, but they are not badly off, or he couldn't have got that bag and his new clothes. What on earth caused Mason to connect him with that diamond story?"

"It's hard to say," observed the constable.

"I will look round and have a chat with him in the morning. Poor little chap! He's sleeping like a top now."

The inspector called at No. 3 Johnson's Mews soon after 10 next morning, but the door was locked and the bird flown. He spoke to Mason after that worthy was remanded for a week, but a night's painful seclusion had sealed the burglar's lips. He vowed, with fearful emphasis, to "get even" with the kid who "ahted" him, for the policeman's evidence had revealed the truth concerning the arrest. But not another word would Mason say about the diamonds, and for a little while the inspector placed his overnight revelations in the category of myths familiar to the police in their daily dealings with criminals.

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Philip awoke shortly before 7.

He was cold and stiff. The weather was chilly, and there was no ardent meteor in the back yard to keep the temperature of the house at a grateful point during the night.

But his active young frame quickly dissipated the effects of a deep sleep on a drafty floor. He washed his face and hands at the sink in the scullery, and his next thought was for breakfast, a proof, if proof were needed, that he arose refreshed in mind and body.

In the Mile End road there are plenty of early morning restaurants. At one of them he made a substantial meal, and, on his return to the mews, he lost not a moment in carrying out a systematic search through all parts of the house and yard for any traces of the meteor which might have escaped his ken in the darkness.

Amid the earth and broken stones of the excavation there were a few fragments of ore and some atomic specimens of the diamantiferous material—not sufficient, all told, to fill the palm of his hand, but he gathered them for obvious reasons and then devoted five vigorous minutes with O'Brien's spade to the task of filling up the deep hole itself.

By lowering the flagstones and breaking the earth beneath he soon gave the small yard an appearance of chaos which might certainly puzzle people, but which would afford no possible clew to the nature of the disturbing element.

At best they might imagine that the dread evidence of some weird crime lay in the broken area. If so, they could dig until they were tired. But, indeed, he was now guarding against a most unlikely hypothesis. The probability was that Johnson's Mews would soon cease to exist and become almost as fabulous as the island of Atlantis.

Moreover, he had a project dimly outlined in his mind which might become definite if all went well with him that day. Then the ownership of No. 3, Johnson's Mews, would cease to trouble him, for Philip was quite sure the whole power of the law would be invoked to prevent him from dealing with his meteor if once the exact place where it fell became publicly known.

O'Brien's shop was scarcely open before Philip was there with his remaining portmanteau.

"Arrah, Phil, me bhoy! Where in the name of goodness are ye gatherin' the beautiful leather thrunks from?" asked the pensioner.

"This is the last one," laughed the boy. "I am off now to find a cab, and you won't see me again until Monday."

"Faix, he's a wonderful lad entirely!" commented the old man. "What sort of plunther has he in the bags, at all at all?"

In idle curiosity he lifted the last addition to the pile. It was normal, even light in weight. Then he nodded knowingly.

"A lot of ould duds belongin' to Mrs. Anson, I'll be boun'. Ah, well, the Lord rest her sowl, 'tis she was the fine woman. I wish I had some one as clever as her to write for me to that thafe of the worruld who thried"—

As there are no signs in the art of literature similar to those which serve

O'Brien's shop was scarcely open before Philip was there.

the needs of musicians, whereby thoughts can be expressed da capo, like a musical phrase, without risk of wearying the reader, it must be understood that Philip had returned from faraway Fenchurch street station with a four wheeler before O'Brien exhausted the first tirade of the day against the war office.

With a cunning that amounted to genius, the boy placed the large, light portmanteau and the two small, heavy ones on the roof of the vehicle, where the driver did not notice the least peculiarity in their weight.

The two large, heavy bags he managed to lift into the interior, one of them needing all his resources to carry it from the shop door to the cab. Were he not fresh and untired he could not have done it. As it was, the effort was a splendid success.

The cabman knew little and O'Brien less of the tremendous avoirdupois of this innocent looking baggage. A long suffering horse may have had his private views, but he did not express them.

Saying goodby to the pensioner in the shop, Philip took good care that none overheard his direction to the driver. In about three-quarters of an hour he lumbered into Charing Cross station without a soul in the East End being aware of his destination.

"Where to, sir?" asked a porter who opened the door for him.

"I only want these bags to be taken to the luggage room," said Philip. "You had better get some one to help you with these two. They are very heavy. They contain specimens of iron ore."

The man took a pull at the solid one.

"By gum," he grinned, "you're right. That would surprise anybody who tried to pick it up and run away with it."

"Rather," agreed Philip. "I am glad to say it is not going very far, only to a laboratory for analysis."

He saw his belongings wheeled away on a barrow before he paid the cabman liberally. He only gave the porter sixpence. The man believed that Philip was a clerk in charge of the minerals. He was grateful for even so small a sum.

On leaving the station, with the receipt for his luggage in his pocket, Philip saw the four wheeler turning into the Strand on its way back to Fenchurch street. He smiled. The tie between east and west was severed. No matter what else might happen to it, his meteor had left Johnson's Mews forever.

It was now a few minutes past 9, but he still had a good deal to do before he presented himself at Isaacstein's at 11.

It was necessary to change his skin once more before the metamorphosis he contemplated was complete. He was acquainted with a large outfitting emporium in Ludgate Hill which exactly suited his requirements, so he rode thither on a 'bus.

Passing Somerset House, he recalled Isaacstein's remark about getting his letter "stamped." He did not know what stamping meant in a legal sense, but he guessed that it implied the affixing of a seal of some sort. There was no need to hurry over it, he thought.

At 11 o'clock Isaacstein would either keep his word about the £5,000 or endeavor to wriggle out of the compact. In either event Philip had already determined to consult Mr. Abingdon.

He had now in his pocket about £38. Half an hour later he was wearing a new tweed suit, new hat and new boots. He had acquired a stock of linen and underclothing, an umbrella and an overcoat. Some of these articles, together with his discarded clothes, were packed in two new leather portmanteaus, on which his initials would be painted by noon, when he would call for them.

He paid £26 for the lot, and the man who waited on him tried in vain to tempt him to spend more. Philip knew exactly what he wanted. He adhered to his programme. He possessed sufficient genuine luggage and clothing to be presentable anywhere. He had enough money to maintain himself for weeks if necessary. For the rest, another couple of hours would place it beyond doubt whether he was a millionaire or not; for, if Isaacstein failed him, London was big enough and wealthy enough to quickly decide that point.

He entered the Hatton Garden office as the clocks struck the hour.

Some boys of his age might have experienced a malicious delight when the youth on guard bounced up with a smirk and a ready:

"Yessir. Vat iss it, sir?"

Not so Philip. He simply asked for Mr. Isaacstein, but he certainly could not help smiling at the expression of utter amazement when his identity dawned on his hearer.

The "Yessir, vil you blease valk in," was very faint, though. The office boy ushered him upstairs as one in a dream, for he had been warned to expect Philip, a Philip in rags, not a smart young gentleman like a bank clerk.

Isaacstein on this occasion looked and acted the sound man of business he really was.

He awaited Philip in his private office. He seemed to be pleased by the change effected in the boy's outward appearance. There was less of burlesque, less outrage to his feelings, in discussing big sums of money with a person properly attired than with one who wore the garments of a tramp.

"Good morning," he said pleasantly. "You are punctual, I am glad to see. Have you been to Somerset House?"

"No," said Philip.

"Why not? If you are going to control a big capital, you must learn business habits or you will lose it, no matter how large it may be."

"Would Somerset House compel you to pay me, Mr. Isaacstein?"

"Not exactly, but the stamping of important documents is a means toward an end I assure you."

"I will see to it, but I wanted primarily to be certain of one of two things—first, will you pay the £5,000 as promised; second, will you give me a fresh purchase note for my diamonds which will not indicate so definitely that I am the boy concerning whom there has been so much needless publicity during the last few days?"

It was of no avail for Isaacstein to bandy words with Philip. A boy of fifteen who casually introduced such a word as "primarily" into a sentence and gave a shrewd thrust about "needless publicity" to the person responsible for it was not to be browbeaten even in business affairs.

The man whipped out a check book.

"Am I to make out a check for £5,000 to 'Philip?'" he asked.

"No; to Philip Anson, please."

"Thank you. And now, shall I put any address on the contract note which I will hand you?"

"The Pall Mall hotel."

Isaacstein with difficulty choked back a comment. The Pall Mall hotel was the most expensive establishment in London. He tossed the check and another document across the table.

"There you are," he said. "Come with me to my bank. You will excuse the hurry. I have a lot to do before I leave for Amsterdam tonight."

Philip saw that the acknowledgment of his diamonds appeared to be in proper form.

"There is no need at this moment to explain to the bank manager that I am the hero of the police court affair?" he said.

"None whatever. I am lending you the money, and will be paying you a